

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 181735Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2424

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMCONSUL CURACAO

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 0130

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, NS, NL

SUBJ: ELECTIONS IN DOUBT THIS YEAR DESPITE NPK "COMMITMENT"

REF : 75 PARAMARIBO 0678 (PARA 4)

1. ONE OF CONCESSIONS VHP HINDUSTANI OPPOSITION THOUGHT THEY EXTRACTED FROM GOVERNING NPK COALITION IN RETURN FOR COOPERATION ON ACHIEVEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE LAST YEAR, WAS PRIMEMIN ARRON'S "COMMITMENT" TO HOLD NEW ELECTIONS THIS SUMMER, ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF BEFORE MANDATORY DATE. VHP LEADERSHIP HAD CALCULATED WIDESPREAD DISAFFECTION WITH AND WITHIN NPK, WHICH PEAKED LAST AUTUMN, WOULD ENHANCE CHANCES OF OPPOSITION RETURN TO POWER IF ELECTIONS HELD EARLY.

2. NOW, IT APPEARS VHP WAS NOT LISTENING CLOSELY ENOUGH TO TERMS OF "COMMITMENT." ACCORDING ARRON AND OTHER NPK LEADERS, COALITION PROMISED ONLY TO DISCUSS HOLDING ELECTIONS, THESE INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN SCHEDULED, AND DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRY HOLDS PRIORITY OVER EXTENSIVE EFFORT NECESSARY ORGANIZE ELECTIONS. IN RECENT SEMANTICS EXERCISE, ARRON WENT ON AIR TO TELL VHP THAT "ELECTIONS CAN (RPT CAN) BE HELD"

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PROVIDED "DIFFERENT PARTY ORGANS OF COALITION ARE INVOLVED" IN

CONSULTATIONS "BETWEEN NOW AND NOT LATER THAN EIGHT MONTHS."
LATER, ECONMIN BRUMA, LEADER OF COALITION'S PNR, TOLD REPORTERS,
"WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT ELECTIONS; WE ARE TALKING ABOUT
DEVELOPMENT."

3. DURING CONVERSATION FEW DAYS AGO, ARRON REPLIED FLATLY TO
MY QUESTION THAT, "THERE WILL BE NO RPT NO ELECTIONS THIS YEAR.
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE. WE MUST CONCENTRATE ALL OF OUR EFFORTS ON
DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRY." PRIMEMIN STRONGLY ASSERTED THAT NPK
AGREED ONLY CONSIDER ELECTIONS. HE DOUBTED IN ANY CASE VHP
WOULD SERIOUSLY INSIST SINCE OPPOSITION UNREADY MOUNT CAMPAIGN
WITH MANY OF ITS FORMER CONSTITUENTS STILL IN HOLLAND WHERE
EAST INDIANS FLED IN LARGE NUMBERS PRIOR INDEPENDENCE. MORE-
OVER, HE CLAIMED, VHP LEADER LACHMON PRIVATELY AGREED WITH
HIM LAST NOV THAT ELECTIONS NEED NOT BE HELD THIS YEAR. (ARRON
FIGURED VHP STANDS TO LOSE FOUR SEATS IF COUNTRY GOES TO POLLS
IN 1976.) HE CONCLUDED THAT ELECTIONS "POSSIBLE" EARLY 1977,
OR PERHAPS EIGHT MONTHS BEFORE MANDATORY DATE IN NOVEMBER.

4. INDEED, OPPOSITION REACTION TO NPK COLD WATER OPERATION HAS
BEEN CURIOUSLY MUTED SO FAR, WITH LACHMON FRONT-PAGED
ONLY ONCE AS CHARGING THAT VHP WILL NOT PUT UP WITH TRICKERY,
THAT IT RECEIVED FIRM ELECTION PROMISES, AND THAT "CAN HAVE
ELECTIONS" MEANS "WILL HAVE ELECTIONS." GEORGE HINDORI, FORMER
VHP VICE CHAIRMAN OUSTED FROM PARTY FOR COOPERATION WITH NPK
IN OPPOSING VHP STALLING ON INDEPENDENCE, HAS PROMISED INTER-
PELLATION OF NPK IN PARLIAMENT ON "COMMITMENT" ISSUE.
BUT, SITTING NOW AS ONE-MAN FRACTION, HE HAS TOLD ME PRIVATELY
HE WOULD NOT BE TOO OUTRAGED IF ELECTIONS SLIPPED TO 1977.
MEANWHILE, PUBLIC PETITION PLACED IN CIRCULATION FOR DISCLOSURE
OF "COMMITMENT" RECORD, IF ANY, HAS RECEIVED LITTLE ATTENTION.

5. COMMENT: TO SOME DEGREE, INEVITABLY, NPK FUDGING ON WELL -
PUBLICIZED "COMMITMENT" HAS CAUSED POLITICAL AND RACIAL
TENSION. COMMERCIAL CONTACTS REPORT SOME LOWERING OF CONFIDENCE
FOLLOWING ARRON SPEECH AND DROP IN ORDERS FOR EXPENSIVE EQUIP-
MENT ATTRIBUTED TO THIS. BUT COMPARED TO TURBULENCE OF MONTHS
PRECEDING INDEPENDENCE, POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND PUBLIC AT
LARGE ARE VIEWING PROSPECT OF NO BALLOTING THIS YEAR WITH
EQUANIMITY.
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6. THOUGH ARRON CLOAKS REJECTION OF EARLY ELECTIONS IN MANTLE OF
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES, AND LACHMON GOES THROUGH
MOTIONS OF DEMANDING THEM, REALITY IS THAT BOTH PLAYING FOR
TIME. NPK NOW OPERATING AGAIN ON SHIFTING ONE VOTE MAJORITY,
NEEDS PERIOD DURING WHICH IT CAN ANNOUNCE IMPRESSIVE ARRAY
OF DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS SPREAD ACROSS ALL THE ELECTORAL
DISTRICTS. THIS ALREADY BEGUN. LACHMON, HURT BY OUTFLOW OF

EAST INDIANS TO HOLLAND, BANKING ON RETURN OF MANY OF
THESE BEFORE ELECTIONEERING BEGINS IN EARNEST. PROBABLE RESULT
IS VOTING NO EARLIER THAN A YEAR FROM NOW.
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